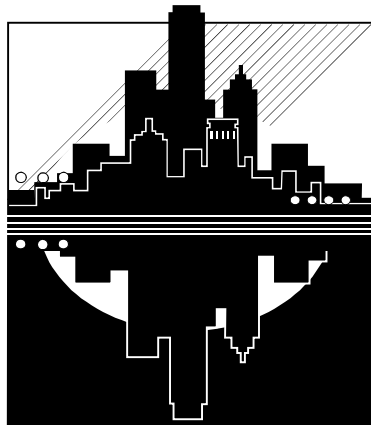


City of Seattle Interpreter Toolkit



A guide to help you provide interpretation and
translation services to Seattle's multilingual
community



Seattle Office for Civil Rights
City of Seattle
May 1999

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Acknowledgments

Purpose: This *City of Seattle Language Interpreter Tool Kit* is intended for use by all City of Seattle departments. It offers guidelines for the effective use of interpreters and translators. Our goal is to continually increase access for our non-English speaking clients.

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights wishes to thank all the individual contributors to this Tool Kit.

The *City of Seattle Interpreter Tool Kit* can be made available in alternative formats upon request. Contact: the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR), 700 Third Avenue, Suite 250, Seattle, WA 98104-1849; phone: (206) 684-4500; TTY (206) 684-4503. This document may be reprinted with credit given to SOCR.

We are Building a City of Choices

“The spectrum of cultures and personalities that makes up Seattle’s population is certainly one of the city’s greatest attributes. One way to measure our success is the extent to which we cultivate and support this richness.”

Mayor Paul Schell
January 6, 1998

**Bicultural Competence in Working with LEP Clients:
A Holistic Model for Providing Interpretation and Translation Services
for the City of Seattle**

When we work with people of any culture, we are touching persons with feelings, spirit, and an identity tied to history, traditions, and customs. The more we can learn about and show respect for those who are different from us, the more effective we can be in providing our services.

Agencies sometimes offer translated materials, information, and articles based on the assumption that a linguistic translation alone makes information culturally appropriate. However, language services for non- or limited-English speakers may not address other interpersonal and professional cultural norms and behaviors that impact cross-cultural communication. Bicultural competence is a broader concept. It may include understanding and respectfully incorporating cultural values and practices that may not be evident solely through language. Awareness of the dynamics influencing interactions within and between cultural and ethnic groups not only *helps* communication with non or limited English speakers, but also helps us understand how we may unintentionally offend or otherwise contribute to a communication break down.

Acquiring bicultural competence is an ongoing process. We can learn from each other about our own cultures as well as what has worked well when communicating with others who do not speak English.



I. Access and Understanding

Language and cultural barriers can make it difficult for people with limited English skills to take advantage of City of Seattle services and resources. Many times we do not know how to contact them, speak their language, or understand how to reduce barriers to their participation. These guidelines further the City's commitment to broadening access to City services for our increasingly diverse residents, including those for which English is not their first language.

A) Every Department Plays a Role

You can:

- facilitate fair and easy access to City services for all Seattle residents;
- help assure that your department's staff are able to respond effectively to the communication needs of persons with limited English proficiency, and
- establish and implement departmental procedures for obtaining assistance from an interpreter or translator.

B) Types of Interpreting

Simultaneous. The interpreter interprets a sentence into the target language while simultaneously listening and comprehending the next sentence.

Consecutive. The speaker stops every 1-5 minutes (usually at the end of every paragraph or complete thought), and the interpreter then renders what was said into the target language.

Summary. The least preferred technique, it is a summary of the statement in the original language. It differs from the simultaneous mode in that it is not interpreted verbatim.

C) Terms Used in This Guide

City Language Resource: City of Seattle employees who speak a language other than English. For the most updated list please refer to the City's Web site (<http://inweb/directory/>).

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Any person whose primary language is not English.

Primary Language: The language that a person identifies as the language in which they prefer to communicate.

Major (Written) Communication: City of Seattle publications, department forms, and documents that: 1) describe services, a client's rights and eligibility; 2) request information from a client or the response on the part of a client, or notify a client of an adverse action, 3) require a client's signature or informed consent; or, 4) are permanent.

Interpretation: The oral or manual transfer of a message from one language to another.

Translation: The written transfer of a message from one language to another.

Certified Languages: Cambodian (Khmer), Chinese-Cantonese, Chinese-Mandarin, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Screening Languages: A language other than a certified language. An interpreter is tested only for social service and medical interpreting. Translator testing is not available.

Certified Interpreters (for Spoken Languages): Interpreters certified by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Certified Translators: Translators certified by DSHS.

Qualified Interpreters: Interpreters who have not met the testing requirements of any of the certified languages, but have met the testing requirements of the screening languages.

Code of Professional Conduct: Established standards to be met by interpreters and translators when providing language services. Any violation of the Code of Professional Conduct may cause the termination of an interpreter or translator's contract with the City.

AT&T Language Line: The AT&T Language Line works somewhat like a conference call where interpretation takes place through an interpreter over the phone. Access to the AT&T Language Line requires an account and a personal code.

II. Your Capacity to Serve Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Clients

In preparing to serve diverse clients:

- Step 1: Survey your department for staff who can speak and write in languages other than English, including American Sign Language. Identify staff who can assist with front desk or telephone contact. Produce a list for all customer service staff, include location of interpreter. The following chart might be helpful.

Employee Name	Language Spoken	Front Desk?	Phone Number	Location

- Step 2: Write down the procedures to be used by staff to assist LEP clients, both walk-in clients and those who communicate by phone.

- Step 3: Update your resource list as staff changes.

III. Responding to LEP Clients

A) Front Desk / Reception Area - In Person Contact

Please post the *Language Chart* from Appendix A in front lobby area.

- Step 1: If you are unable to communicate in English with a visitor, point to the *Language Chart*: "What Language Do You Speak?"
- Step 2: Check if there is a staff person who speaks the indicated language and ask for assistance.
- Step 3: If no one is available, say, "Please wait a moment," indicate that you are calling someone on the telephone, and check Appendix D, "City of Seattle Language Resource List," for a resource person who speaks the appropriate language.
- Step 4: In the event you cannot reach anyone, or no one speaks the appropriate language, notify your department administrator of the need to use the AT&T Language Line (if your department provides this service).

B) Telephone Contacts:

- Step 1: Ask if s/he speaks any English. Try to determine the client's primary language and refer to the appropriate staff person.
- Step 2: If no staff person speaks the language, then slowly, clearly and politely say, "No one is available who speaks _____ (language). Please give me your name and telephone number." Then call an appropriate City language resource person for assistance in determining the nature of the call so you may respond appropriately, or notify your department administrator that you need to access the AT&T Language Line (if available in your department).
- Step 3: If you need to arrange for a certified or qualified interpreter for a meeting, please refer to "Acquiring the Services of a Certified Interpreter or Translator" on page 9.

C) One-on-One Meetings

Except for medical appointments and legal proceedings, a certified interpreter is not legally mandated for most meetings between City employees and clients. If the meeting concerns a major communication, then it's advisable to provide a certified or qualified interpreter. In all other cases, the following procedures may be followed:

- Step 1: Although your department can provide an interpreter, ask the client if s/he would like to provide his or her own, the person must be over 18 years of age.
- Step 2: Arrange appointments far enough in advance to insure that a staff person, City language resource person, or interpreter is available. At least one week in advance of a scheduled meeting, advise the client in writing of the time and place of the meeting and whether or not an interpreter will be provided.
- Step 3: Meet with the interpreter prior to meeting with the client and do the following:
- Ask the interpreter how to say hello, good-bye, and thank you in the client's language.
 - Explain the purpose of the meeting.
 - Remind the interpreter about confidentiality. (See Code of Professional Conduct, Appendix C)
 - Discuss seating or positioning.
 - Discuss eye and physical contact.
 - Remind the interpreter not to screen the client's responses.
 - Explain technical terms.

- Discuss whether or not s/he or the client may feel uncomfortable discussing certain matters.

D) Meetings with Community Groups

Step 1: Determine whether or not there will be a mix of LEP and English speaking persons attending the presentation. If it is mixed, arrange the LEP participants so that they can clearly see and hear the interpreter.

Note. For a mixed group, simultaneous interpretation through use of electronic transmitting and listening equipment is preferable. This equipment can be rented from any audio visual store. Otherwise, use consecutive interpretation so that the interpreter does not disrupt the session.

Step 2: Determine if there needs to be a translation of written material. If so, see, “Arranging for the Translation of Written Information” in the following section. If you plan to use charts, make them easy to understand visually. Avoid jargon or technical information.

Step 3: Speak with the interpreters before the meeting if possible. Brief them on the presentation and summarize important information. Please see Step 3 on page 6 regarding meeting with the interpreter.

IV. Arranging for Translation of Written Information

Translation is not simply a matter of substituting words in one language for words in another. It is a matter of understanding the thought expressed in one language and then rendering it into another language. Interpreters and translators change words into meaning, and then change meaning back into words of a different language.

Note: If a document is a major communication tool, a team of professional translators (a writer and an editor), preferably certified, should translate the document. Otherwise, a qualified translator can be used.

Step 1: Identify the meeting date, languages and dialects for translation.

Step 2: If it is a major written communication, attach an English version.

Step 3: If it is not a major written communication, you may use a City language resource person, but make sure the document is reviewed as described in Step 5 below.

Step 4: Allow at least 3 to 4 weeks before a meeting to have a document(s) translated by a City language resource person. A longer document will require even more lead time. Remember, your City language resources are volunteers; be respectful of their time.

Step 5: Native speakers from the target community should check the translation to assure that it is culturally and linguistically appropriate. This is very important, and it is strongly recommended to make time for this step.

V. Acquiring the Services of a Certified Interpreter or Translator

If your department does not have a budget for interpreter services, first check the *City of Seattle Language Resource List* on the Web at <http://inweb/directory/>

- Step 1: Refer to Appendix E, “Certified Interpreters and Translators Resource List” and select an interpreter or translator.
- Step 2: Determine if the interpreter or translator has a vendor number with the City of Seattle by contacting:

Vendor Relations, Executive Services Department phone: 206-684-8335, fax: 206-684-0282

If the individual selected does not have an established vendor number, s/he should contact Vendor Relations at the above number for a Tax ID form before his/her language services can be used.

- Step 3: When circumstances dictate the need to select an interpreter or translator not presently in the City’s system, please help that individual to initiate the process of becoming a vendor. All interpreters and translators hired by the City must have a vendor number to receive payment.
- Step 4: Verify hourly rates with the interpreter/translator. Be sure to check if you are also required to pay for his/her parking costs and mileage.
- Step 5: When the interpreter/translator contacts you, confirm the date, beginning and ending times, the total number of hours, specific location (address, building, floor, room number), and billing information. Make sure that all parties are clear about what is needed. It is recommended you include this information in a written letter of confirmation.
- Step 6: Arrange for a parking pass at the Municipal Garage or parking reimbursement, whichever is appropriate to your situation.

Language Interpreter Tool Kit Tips

- Place the Language Chart in a visible location.
- Survey office staff for language competencies as soon as possible.
- Create a binder of phrases in different languages. Insert with the chart in Appendix A. Phonetically write out simple key phrases such as, “hello,” “thank you,” “you’re welcome,” “excuse me,” and make these phrases available to front office staff.

- Establish relationships with individuals and community groups whose primary language is not English.

Appendix A

LANGUAGE CHART

УКАЖИТЕ, НА КАКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ ВЫ ГОВОРЯТЕ	Russian
HAGA EL FAVOR DE INDICAR EL IDIOMA QUE HABLA USTED	Spanish
CHỈ VÀO NGÔN NGỮ MÀ BAN NÓI ĐƯỢC (BAN NÓI TIẾNG GÌ?)	Vietnamese
ຖ້າທ່ານເວົ້າຄວາມລາວ ໃຫ້ຊື່ໃສ່ນີ້	Laotian
TILMAAN HALKAN HADII AAD AF-SOMALI KU HADASHID	Somali
ቋንቋዎ አማርኛ ከሆነ እዚህ ያመልክቱ።	Amharic
ቋንቋኹም ትግርኛ እንተ ደኣ ኹይኑ ኣብዚ ኣመልክቱ።	Trigrinya
ក្រុមបង្គុលភាសា ខ្មែរសោក្របូសោក(្រ) ខ្មែរសោក	Cambodian
FAÁSINO ILE GAGANA ETE TUATALA AL	Samoan
AFAAN-OROMO DUBBATU TAANAAN AS AGARSIISAA	Oromiffa
請指出您要用的語言	Chinese
ITURO KUNG ALIN WIKA ANG ALAM NINYO	Tagalog
POINT TO THE LANGUAGE YOU SPEAK	English

Appendix B

Tips on Serving the Multi-Lingual External Client

The Basics - Speaking

Speak Slowly with Longer Pauses:

- ✎ Enunciate as you normally would, but add longer pauses so your client has time to process or translate what you are saying.
- ✎ Learn to be comfortable with longer periods of silence while your client is processing your words.
- ✎ Do not talk louder - just more slowly. Your clients can hear you – they may not be able to understand you.
- ✎ Be patient -- your clients may need time to find the right word.

Rephrase - Don't Just Repeat Yourself:

- ✎ Rephrase in clearer or simpler language - you weren't understood the first time, so try a different tactic.
- ✎ Remember that repeating yourself can sound like impatience.

Speak in Specific and Simple English:

- ✎ Don't use jargon or idioms.
- ✎ Avoid words like "should" or "must" – and avoid using contractions like "can't" because often the "n't" is not heard.
- ✎ Focus on clear and simple nouns and verbs.

Learn to Be Comfortable with Lack of Eye Contact When Speaking:

- ✎ It's one thing to know that many cultures do not make direct eye contact; but, it's another thing to be comfortable with little or no eye contact.

The Basics - Listening

Learn to Tune Your Ear to Other Dialects and Accents:

- ✎ This is important whether you have clients from one specific region of the world or from different regions of the world.
- ✎ Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you don't understand.

It's OK to Ask Your Client to Speak More Slowly So You Can Understand:

- ✎ Remember to communicate patience and respect with your voice and facial expressions.
- ✎ Don't lie and say you understand someone when you truly don't.

Beyond the Basics

More Common Sense Practices to Better Serve Your Multi-Lingual External Clients:

- ☞ Read books on cross-cultural communications.
- ☞ If you're taking a business trip abroad – and plan on presenting your hosts with presents, do some research to learn business and cultural protocol and etiquette. The Business and Technology section of the Downtown Library can assist you.

For example: It's considered a gesture of respect in most Asian nations to use both hands when presenting your business card. Your research will tell you which countries adhere strictly to this custom and which countries view one hand or two as acceptable.

- ☞ Do not make assumptions about what someone is saying or doing – actions and words often get lost in translation.

For example: The English word “take” could mean “purchase” or “steal” – that's why it's important to be specific and rephrase what you say and what the speaker says to you.

If You Serve Customers from Specific Cultures:

- ☞ Learn more about the culture(s) represented by your customers.
- ☞ Learn words and phrases that describe your product in different languages.
- ☞ Post signs in different languages that will assist your visitors.
- ☞ Prepare information sheets that clearly explain your policies of general information because many people find it easier to understand written English rather than spoken English.
- ☞ Translate the information sheets into different languages.

Learn the Basics of American Sign Language:

- ☞ Learn how to sign words that describe your business.
- ☞ Learn how to sign “welcome” – “thank you” – “good-bye”.
- ☞ Prepare “flash cards” with commonly used phrases as a back up.

Appendix C

Code of Professional Conduct for Interpreters and Translators

A. Accuracy

An interpreter should always interpret thoroughly and exactly, omitting nothing and stating precisely what has been said, given the exigencies of grammar and syntax in both languages.

B. Confidentiality

When an interpreter is used for legal or medical purposes, the issue of confidentiality may arise. In these situations an interpreter must protect the confidentiality of all knowledge gained during his/her duties. The attorney-client privilege applies to the interpreter, as providing the verbal link. The interpreter may have access to private documents, police records, medical files, etc. An interpreter should not derive personal profit or advantage from any confidential information acquired while acting in a professional capacity.

C. Impartiality

The interpreter should maintain an impartial attitude. The interpreter should not take a side or become aligned with any one party, unless otherwise advised.

D. Proficiency

An interpreter should only provide his professional services in matters in which he is confident of his capacity to perform accurately. The interpreter should withdraw from a matter in which s/he will be unable to function effectively, because of lack of proficiency, preparation or difficulty in understanding the party for whom the translation is made

E. Low Profile

The overall aim of the interpreter is to create as natural an atmosphere as possible, much like the atmosphere that would prevail if a language barrier did not exist. Interpreters must maintain a low profile, remembering that they are not speaking for themselves but merely conveying the words of another. They should not draw attention to their interpretations, since the listeners must focus only upon the individual requiring interpretation. The interpreter should control overt expressions of opinion, such as surprise, sympathy, or disgust, while interpreting. When interpreting, interpreters should position themselves where they will not obstruct the view of the individual in need of assistance.

F. Language Level

Interpreters should use the same level of language used by the speaker; they should interpret colloquial, slang, obscene or crude language as well as sophisticated language

according to the exact language of the speaker. It is not the interpreter's task to tone down, improve or edit what the original speaker said.

The interpreter should not simplify or enhance statements for a non-English speaker according to the interpreter's assessment of the listener's level of understanding. The non-English speaker should request an explanation of simplification if the individual deems it necessary.

Idioms, proverbs, and sayings can rarely be interpreted literally. An equivalent expression, or appropriate explanatory phrase should be used instead.

G. Characterization of Testimony

An interpreter should never characterize nor give personal explanations of testimony. The communicator should direct a clarification from the person being assisted, if necessary. Except in the case of a certain language in which a gesture or grimace has a particular significance different from English, the interpreter should not explain or emulate a witness, gesture or grimace.

H. Questions Answered with Questions

The interpreter must translate the exact response of the speaker even if the answer to a question is another question.

I. Interpreting Mixed-language Responses

If a speaker, through an interpreter, interjects a complete response in English, the interpreter should stand back so that everyone else can hear the response in English.

Appendix D

City of Seattle Language Resource List

All city employees with multi-lingual resources
can be accessed on the City's inweb page at:

<http://inweb/directory/>

and find the prompt that says:

Find a Person by Language Skills:	
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Appendix E

Certified Interpreters and Translators Resource List

Other resources are:

Martha Cohen, Administrator
King County Court Interpreters
and Translators
(206) 296-9358

Washington Interpreters
and Translators Service (WITS)
(360) 387-5690

Translators and Interpreters
Guild (TTIG)
Christina Perez-Lopez
(206) 725-7644

Center for Cross Cultural
Health Care Program
Bookda Gheiser, Director
Pacific Medical Clinics
(206) 621-4453

AT&T Language Line:

The AT&T Language Line works somewhat like a conference call. Access to the AT&T Language Line requires an account and a personal code.

Phone charges for translation services start at about \$2.50 per minute and are based on the commonality or obscurity of the language translation needed. There is also a one-time set up fee of approximately \$100.

Contact AT&T at: 1-800-752-6096 for details.

Appendix F

Guidelines for Selecting a Qualified Interpreter

When do I need to use a qualified interpreter or translator?

If you are presenting a major communication you need to use a certified interpreter. However, there are currently only seven certified languages. If a certified interpreter is not available, you may use a qualified interpreter.

The following guidelines are general considerations when choosing an interpreter or translator who is not certified:

1. General knowledge of the subject or content of the speech(es) that are to be interpreted.
2. Intimate familiarity with both the culture of the United States and that of the target language.
3. Extensive vocabulary in both languages.
4. Ability to express thoughts clearly and concisely in both languages.
5. Excellent note-taking technique for consecutive interpreting.
6. At least 2-3 years of experience for simultaneous interpreting.